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BUREAU OF AGRICULTURAL ECONOMICS
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* SHIPMENTS OF PACKAGE BEES IN 1948 *

A total of 1,164,000 pounds of package bees were shipped in 1948 -- 15 percent less than in 1947--according to the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. Queens shipped by package bee producers totaled 858,800, compared with 1,007,200 in 1947--also 15 percent less. Each of the six major package bee States showed a decrease in bee shipments from last year. Queen shipments were also down in each of these States except Texas, where an increase of 1 percent occurred.

Reports from package bee shippers indicate that the 1949 season is so uncertain that many of them would not hazard an estimate of the pounds of bees they expect to ship. However, a tabulation of the reports from those shippers who did report on this question indicate 8 percent fewer bees will be shipped in 1949. Some of the larger shippers were unable to report the pounds they expect to ship, but indicated they expect a poor season. If answers had been received from these shippers the decrease would probably be much sharper than the 8 percent indicated. Actual shipments in 1948 were 17 percent smaller than expected because of the slow movement of honey at low prices. In 1947 actual shipments were 2 percent above the expected and in 1946 they were about the same.

In January, shippers reporting shipments had orders for about 47 percent of their production, compared with 64 percent a year earlier and with 79 percent in 1946. Reports from shippers show that advance orders are very spotty ranging from none in some cases to a normal booking of bees in the case of other shippers. Demand for bees is poor because of the slow movement and low price of honey. Shippers hope demand will improve after the extent of storm losses in the Western States and Canada is determined.

The total number of packages shipped in 1948 was 461,393, compared with 538,651 in 1947, a decrease of 14 percent. The decrease in package shipments was mainly in the 3-pound packages, which were 29 percent below 1947 shipments. Of the total pounds of bees shipped in 1948, about 46 percent moved in 2-pound packages, 45 percent in 3-pound, 5 percent in 4-pound and 2 percent in 5-pound packages. Bees shipped in units other than those mentioned above accounted for about 2 percent of total shipments.

Colonies held for the production of package bees in 1948 totaled 245,300--1 percent more than in 1947. In spite of this increase in colonies, shipments fell off nearly one-sixth from 1947, reflecting the reduced demand. An average of only 4.7 pounds of bees per colony were shipped in 1948 compared with 5.7 pounds in 1947. Production of bees per colony in Louisiana was 6.5 pounds, Mississippi 6.1 pounds, Georgia 5.1 pounds, Alabama 5.0 pounds, California 3.8 pounds and Texas 2.8 pounds. The low averages per colony in California and Texas were due to the practice of making a light shaking of bees for packages and leaving the colonies in shape to build up and produce a honey crop later in the season. The winter has been very warm in the Southern States resulting in heavy consumption of stores and causing bees to be heavy with brood.

(O V E R)

TABLE THREE - Number of Packages and Total Pounds of Bees Shipped in 1947 and 1948

States	Number of packages - 1948	Number of packages - 1947	Total	Other Units	Total pounds
Georgia	28,724	33,139	2,757	722	65,337
Alabama	50,235	24,625	2,000	2,000	87,474
Mississippi	22,410	21,480	2,000	2,000	3,012
Louisiana	30,419	41,472	2,000	2,000	82,015
Texas	22,705	13,206	232	186	35,409
California	74,052	27,427	2,662	0	101,141
Other States	21,216	13,509	1,400	1,000	37,205
U.S. (1948)	268,902	175,112	12,632	4,711	451,393
U.S. (1947)	275,652	247,837	12,528	2,634	538,651

* as reported by shippers reporting expected shipments.

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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